

## Vulnerable families in Sundarbans receive aid

CITY DESK

Households dependent on natural resources of the Sundarbans have been significantly affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This is mainly due to reduced income as a result of limited access, restricted movement, less demand of harvested products and more.

In light of this, some 7,000 households neighbouring Chandpai and Sarankhola Range of the Sundarbans are receiving cash grants and aid packages, said a press release.

The support comes as part of a special emergency project "COVID 19 Mitigation Measures in the Sundarbans" -- jointly implemented by Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is funding the initiative, while Centre for Natural Resources Studies (CNRS) supported the rollout of this effort, the press document said.

Begum Habibun Nahar, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, inaugurated the programme on Thursday at the Chandpai Range Office premise.

During her speech, the Deputy Minister urged everyone to join hands with BFD to conserve the Sundarbans, which she termed "Our pride and our lifeline," said the press release. She also thanked the German Government for their support and expected continued cooperation in conservation and enrichment of Bangladesh's vital forest resources, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

In the inauguration event, senior BFD officials, Divisional Forest Officers of Sundarbans East Forest Division, Upazilla Chairman of Mongla, GIZ Bangladesh and CNRS representatives, Chandpai Co-Management Committee members were present among others, the press release said.

## DU students

FROM PAGE 3

a place where humour has no place? Cartoons are very effective at relaying important information. Cartoonist Kishore showed the kind of courage that is non-existent in the pens and paintbrushes of many. But this courage is not allowed in Bangladesh," said Jahid Jamil, a student cartoonist and organising secretary of Bangladesh Student Union's DU unit.

Writer Mushtaq Ahmed and cartoonist Ahmed Kishore were arrested on May 6 after being prosecuted under Digital Security Act for their writings and their art. They have been denied bail multiple times.

## Act neutrally

FROM PAGE 3

on January 27, according to the Election Commission.

The EC issued a circular in this regard on Saturday, said Mohammad Hasanuzzaman, returning officer of CCC polls. He said there will be no restriction on public transport movement.

When asked about the reason, Hasanuzzaman said if general holiday is announced, many voters may go out of the city. "If voters stay in the city, turnout will increase," he said.

Moreover, if it is declared, traders and businesspeople will suffer too, he said.

### 410 POLLING STATIONS "RISKY"

According to police, 410 polling stations out of 723 are "risky". Of the polling stations, 12 stations are situated in Hathazari upazila, which is out of Chattogram Metropolitan Police's jurisdiction.

CMP sources said the risky polling stations are situated under 20 wards of CCC where police are on high alert to avoid any kind of untoward situation. Besides, law enforcers have chalked out four-tier security measures for the election, they said.

Marking the risky centers "important", CMP Deputy Commissioner Abdul Warish said, "A team of six armed police personnel and 12 Ansar members will be deployed at important centres while four police and 12 Ansar members at regular centers."

Around 8,000 police personnel will be deployed across the city and around 1,500 are on stand by for any emergency during the polls, he said.

## Pledges are beyond their

FROM PAGE 12

Architect Iqbal Habib, also joint secretary of the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said that among other jobs, city corporations collect revenue and take care of vital civic amenities like waste collection and management, mosquito control, maintenance and repair of roads and footpaths, surface drains, street lightings and fighting food adulteration.

Both Rezaul and Shahadat, in their manifestos, gave priority to ending waterlogging and overcoming traffic congestion in the port city and promised to resolve the issues, if elected.

However, these vital issues remain under the jurisdiction of the Chattogram Development Authority and the Chattogram Metropolitan Police traffic department.

On Saturday, Rezaul announced his 37-point manifesto while Shahadat announced his 9-point one on the same day.

Some of the pledges in Rezaul's manifesto are: eliminating waterlogging, 100-day priority projects, resolving traffic congestion, restoring discipline on roads, evicting occupants of canals and rivers, managing waste, developing Chattogram as the country's tourism capital, restoring the lost natural diversity and environment of the port city, harnessing the importance of Chattogram in the Blue Economy, building a mosquito-free city, and discouraging the construction of unplanned facilities.

But most of the pledges he made are under the jurisdictions of other authorities. Shahadat also gave eradicating the waterlogging problem the highest priority.

He said, if elected, he will recover the city's canals to build a waterlogging-free Chattogram and build dams to protect both sides of the canals, taking effective measures to prevent the slicing away of hills in the city.

The BNP candidate also said fertiliser and electricity will also be generated through waste recycling.

Experts said most of the promises made by the BNP candidate are not totally under the jurisdiction of the CCC as various concerned government ministries and departments are looking into those matters.

Dr Mahfuzur Rahman, convener of Chattogram's Public Health Right Protection Committee, said as per the third schedule of the Local Government Act, all sorts of responsibilities in the city has been given to the mayors of city corporation without empowerment.

The mayor has responsibility but no power, he said.

According to Article 59 of the Constitution, all the government officials and staffers would go under the local government but a law in this regard has not been enacted. So the mayors, virtually, do not have any power to address most of the pledges in their election manifestos.

Only the system of the metropolitan government can address the issue, Mahfuzur said, adding so the public representatives in local government institutions should raise their voices to introduce the metropolitan government system.

Otherwise the mayors would pledge to voters but in many cases, they would not be able fulfil those and consequently the voters would be deprived, he said.

Asked, why the mayoral candidates, despite knowing their limitation, offer such pledges, Mahfuzur said many of them do not have a clear idea about their mandate and others do it to be popular amongst voters even after knowing they do not have the mandate to meet those pledges.

## Teenage boy arrested on rape charge

FROM PAGE 12

Sharsha Police Station.

In Siddhirganj, Narayanganj, police are looking for a 20-year-old man accused of raping a ninth-grader.

The girl's family members told police that Sajib used to stalk the girl and raped her on January 18. Her mother filed a case against Sajib yesterday.

The girl was sent to a hospital, said Moshir Rahman, officer-in-charge of Siddhirganj Police Station.

[Our correspondents in Benapole and Narayanganj] contributed to the report.]

## ACC sues former OC of Puthia

FROM PAGE 12

Star published a report that he was in service though he had been accused in forgery, land grabbing, and an attempted murder.

According to the case description, Nurul was murdered on June 11, 2019, following his dispute with other transport leaders over the election of Puthia Motor Sramik Union.

On the same day, Nurul's daughter Nigar Sultana filed a murder case with Puthia Police Station against eight people, including transport leader Abdur Rahman Patal and local Awami League leader Ahsanul Haque Masud.

In the FIR, she also alleged that then OC Shakil was involved in manipulating the election results in favour of Patal.

But police later submitted an FIR of the murder case to the trial court in Rajshahi, dropping the names of Patal, Masud and OC Shakil.

Nigar later filed a writ petition with the HC, seeking its directive on forming an enquiry committee to probe Shakil's tampering of the FIR.

On September 16, 2019, an HC bench, led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim, directed the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Rajshahi to conduct an enquiry into the allegation.

Rajshahi's then CJM Md Mehedi Hasan Talukder submitted a probe report to the HC in November 2019, holding five police officials, including three additional superintendents of Rajshahi police and OC Shakil, responsible.

In December that year, the HC observed that the allegation against Shakil was undoubtedly grave and a punitive offence. Based on the judicial probe, the HC directed the ACC to initiate the next course of legal action.

OC Shakil then filed a petition with the Supreme Court, challenging the HC verdict. In March 2020, the SC dismissed his appeal and upheld the HC verdict.

## Dhaka

FROM PAGE 12

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during PM level summit with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina on December 17 last year, India on January 21 supplied two million doses of vaccines produced by SII.

Under a tripartite deal among the Bangladesh government, Beximco Pharmaceuticals and SII, three crore more vaccines are scheduled to arrive in six months. The first tranche of 50 lakh shots of the purchased vaccine is scheduled to arrive today.

At the vaccine handover ceremony on January 21, Health Minister Zahid Maleque also requested Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram K Doraiswami to ensure that the contract of the vaccine is implemented smoothly.

Bangladesh will begin pilot vaccination of the vaccine on Wednesday, a week before the planned countrywide rollout vaccination campaign.

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla visited Dhaka on August 18-19 and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen was then first scheduled to visit India in September and then in December, but could not do it due to the pandemic.

The secretary was also infected with Covid-19.

The foreign office consultations will comprise all the issues of bilateral relations, including trade and commerce, deals on water-sharing on Teesta and other common rivers, connectivity projects and border killings, officials said.

"Bangladesh would seek more Indian investments in Bangladesh and remove the non-tariff barriers of exporting Bangladeshi goods to India," a foreign minister official said.

He said though Bangladesh's export to India has exceeded the \$1 billion mark, the trade between the two countries is heavily imbalanced against Bangladesh.

Dhaka expects Delhi to expedite the settlement of water-sharing deals. In 2011, Bangladesh and India failed to sign the Teesta water-sharing agreement due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition. The issue remains unresolved as of now.

The two countries are now working on water-sharing deals on six other small rivers -- Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar.

"Besides, the connectivity projects under the Indian Line of Credit also need expedition. We are working on how to speed up the release of money and implementation of the projects," the official added.

'Blue jet'

FROM PAGE 12

The fifth flash sent out a pulsating blue jet, a form of lightning that can reach as far as 50km into the stratosphere and lasts less than a second.

## City

FROM PAGE 3

connectivity among the canals where it is possible.

"If this is implemented, Dhaka will be a very beautiful city," he said.

He said they have asked the two city corporations to submit their project proposals on the canals.

Tazul said they will provide all kinds of support from the ministry to the city corporations in this regard.

The capital's city corporations on December 31 formally took over the management and maintenance responsibilities of 26 canals and 10-kilometres of box culverts from Dhaka Wasa, raising hope that city's long-standing waterlogging problem would be solved.

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) had been responsible for the 26 canals (84.5 km) and the 10-box culverts (around 10 km) since 1988. It also looks after 385 km of storm water drains.

The DNCC and DSCC had been managing 2,200 km of pipe and surface drains alone at that time.

## Star journo Mirdha wins AmCham award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star senior staff reporter Mohammad Refayet Ullah Mirdha has won the prestigious AmCham Frontline Journalism Award for his work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along with him, some 25 journalists from print and electronic media also won the awards, and were presented with crests, certificates, and cash prizes by Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen at a virtual programme yesterday.

Mirdha won the award for his report "Exports crash to a 40-year-low", published on The Daily Star on May 9 of last year.

The award was organised by American Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bangladesh (AmCham), in collaboration with Masthead PR.

## No achieving

FROM PAGE 3

The opening session was titled "Lifelong learning -- education to instil leadership values". Country Director of Asia Foundation Faisal Seraj; BGMEA President Rubana Huq, and Global Campaign for Education (GCE) Co-founder Rasheda K Choudhury participated in the discussion.

Principal of Sunbeams School, Munize Manzur; Brac Institute of Educational Development's Executive Director Dr Erum Mariam and representative from Asia Foundation Sukla Dey participated in the session "Learn and play: benefits of storytelling and activities in children's education."

Prime Bank's Head of Brand Nazmul Karim; JCI Bangladesh National President Niaz Morshed Elite; Deputy General Manager, of MM Ispahani Didarul Hasan, and Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC) Communication Manager Upashana Salam spoke at the session titled "From campus to professional life: reshaping education for tomorrow's workforce."

Former UGC Chair Azad Chowdhury and Prof M Rezwana Khan of UIIU discussed the fourth industrial revolution in the afternoon session.

Upskill Co-founder Mustafizur Rahman; Alokit Hridoy Foundation Chairperson Azwa Nayeem and Founder and Director of Kotha, Umama Zillur spoke on "EdTech: innovation transforming the education landscape."

HerStory Foundation's Curator Katerina Don and ULAB Pro-vice Chancellor Shamsud Mortuza discussed the importance of arts and creativity in modern education practices at a session as well.

## Govt can now publish results without

FROM PAGE 12

and Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board Act, 2020.

Education Minister Dipu Moni placed the bills that were passed by voice vote.

The authorities will be able to publish result if it is not possible to hold and conduct exams at the end of the intermediate and secondary stage and any other stage because of a pandemic, epidemic, and Act of God or any other inevitable circumstances as determined by the government, by an order in the official gazette, said the bills.

The government moved the bills as it could not hold and publish HSC and equivalent exams due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Dipu Moni said that they would issue a gazette notification within the next two days and subsequently announce the HSC exam.

The authorities have completed all their works to announce HSC and equivalent exams, she added.

Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, after a weekly cabinet

meeting, assured that the results of the HSC and equivalent exams would be published by January 28.

The scheduled HSC and equivalent examinations were cancelled on October 7 due to the pandemic. It was decided that students will get their results based on their SSC and JSC results.

A total of 1,365,789 candidates under 11 educational boards by the first week of this January.

The results will be published after coordinating 75 percent of the SSC and 25 percent of JSC-JDC results, Dipu Moni told the media earlier.

The HSC batch of 2020 will be the first batch of students who will get certificates without sitting for the examinations as it is the first time in the history of the country that a public examination has been cancelled.

On March 17, the government closed all schools to contain the spread of coronavirus. The closure has recently been extended till January 30. The authorities have yet to decide when to reopen the educational institutions.

The long closure has led to the cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray.

BNP MP Harun Rashid, while taking part in the discussion on the bills, said that some kind of exams should be taken.

"Auto pass will call on a grave crisis. Meritorious students will be the worst sufferers of the auto pass," he said.

Gonoforum MP Mukabbir Khan also said that exams could be held following health guidelines but the government failed to hold this.

Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Haque said that there was an instance of giving an auto pass to students in 1961 and people who passed in such a way still face a disgrace.

BNP MP Rumeen Farhana said students rigorously become attentive to lessons ahead and during a public exam. In this corona situation, students were out of the classroom and practical classes.

"If you give HSC results based on results of previous public results, will not ensure justice for candidates", she said.

## No deaths in Europe tied to Covid jobs

FROM PAGE 12

In France, of 800,000 people vaccinated, nine deaths of chronically ill residents of care and retirement homes were recorded by Friday.

The national medicines agency ANSM said that based on available evidence, "Nothing leads to the conclusion that the reported deaths were linked to vaccination."

Other examples include 13 deaths of elderly people recorded in Sweden and seven in Iceland, all with no link established.

In Portugal, a care worker died two days after being inoculated but the justice ministry said a post-mortem found no direct link.

France's interior ministry on January 18 listed 71 "observations of death" in Europe of people who had the inoculation, but offered no further details.

The European Medicines Agency said that despite the deaths, "to date no specific concerns have been

identified with Comirnaty", the commercial name for the Pfizer shot.

In many countries -- such as France, Norway, Britain and Spain -- the frail and elderly are first in line for vaccinations.

"It is not unexpected that some of these people may naturally fall ill due to their age or underlying conditions shortly after being vaccinated, without the vaccine playing any role in that," the UK medicines regulator MHRA said.

The deaths are a highly sensitive issue, and approaches to informing the public vary. France and some Nordic countries have reported post-vaccination deaths and detailed the potential side effects of the jobs even if no link has been established.

But Britain's MHRA said it would make a statement at a later date, possibly seeking to avoid spreading alarm.

In any event, European health officials say the deaths do not call into

question the safety of the vaccines.

Norway has not changed its vaccination rollout, even if it has recommended doctors consider the overall health of the most frail before giving them the job, the policy of numerous other countries.

In India, the huge coronavirus vaccination drive is behind schedule, with a third of recipients not showing up for appointments because of safety fears, technical glitches and a belief that the pandemic is ending.

After one week, India has vaccinated 1.4 million people, or 200,000 people per day. It had initially hoped to process 300,000 per day before ramping up the rollout and inoculating 300 million by July.

At the Sharda Hospital in Greater Noida near New Delhi, pharma student Khushi Dhingra, 17, hugged a friend and wept as she waited to get her shot.

## The killing of Kohelia

FROM PAGE 1

for the road construction. As a result, the river has narrowed significantly.

Huge shoals emerged from the river as road construction reduced water flow from the sea, Mohon said.

Many commercial and non-mechanised fishing boats were seen stuck on the shoal of the river.

No wooden fishing boats, mechanised or non-mechanised, or vessels carrying salt -- produced in the area -- can currently navigate the river, thanks to the road construction and river filling.

"The road to the power plant not only destroyed the river but also our livelihood, hopes, and future. Now I eke out a living on daily labour," an aggrieved Mohon said.

The Kohelia river emanates from Ujantia union of Pekua upazila and ends up in the Bay of Bengal, crisscrossing 12km through many villages such as Mohon's.

Abul Bashar Parvej, convener of the Committee to Protect Kohelia River, told The Daily Star that the river was a local heritage for Moheshkhali.

The river once facilitated easy communications with other parts of Cox's Bazar and Chattogram as traders used to carry their goods in boats -- salt traders in particular used to ship their produce via the Kohelia.

"It is now on its deathbed owing to this road being built."

"More than 2,000 fishermen from three unions including Dholghat, Matarbari and Kalamarchhara lost their livelihoods. Many of them are

now migrating to shipbreaking yards in Chattogram in search of work," he said.

"We protested, organising human chains to stop such mindless activities, but in vain."

Project Director Shyamal Kumar Bhattacharya, also additional chief engineer of the Roads and Highways department, told The Daily Star that they got clearance from the Department of Environment (DoE) for the road construction.

The project includes the building of a 13km road from Badarkhali to the Matarbari power plant, 7.4km of which will be along the Kohelia river, he said.

"We are doing minimum encroachment and it is not a full-fledged river. It is a canal which dries up during low tide," he said.

Saffat Hasan, manager of the project, claimed that they had their clearance issued by DoE, renewed it each year, and had the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and feasibility study approved by the DoE.

Deputy director of DoE Cox's Bazar office Nazmul Huda told The Daily Star that the project authorities had obtained clearance from DoE (in 2014) and that they had renewed it.

"But the problem is they did not mention anything about encroaching the river. Had they mentioned it, DoE would not have issued any clearance. We will move as per the law," he said.

Sharmeen Soneya Murshid, a member of National River Conservation Committee, who visited

the Kohelia river on January 20, told The Daily Star that the way the Roads and Highways Department filled up the road is "a criminal act" against the river.

"The DoE must be held responsible if they issued any clearance for the project," she said, adding that RHD embarked on the road construction violating existing environmental law.




"RHD brought a change in the design after it was approved by DoE. The RHD authorities did not feel it necessary to have their renewed design approved from DoE again," Murshid said.

General secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) Sharif Jamil told The Daily Star that while the government is on a campaign to reclaim river land, an entire river is being filled up -- setting a massive contradiction between policy and action.

"Why does the Roads and Highways Department have to fill up a river mile after mile? How dare they destroy the river -- its rich biodiversity and the livelihoods of hundreds who live off of fishing in the river?"

He raised these questions, adding that the grabbers know very well they will have to face no punishment for this.

At a protest programme at the Dhaka Reporters Unity office in Segunbagicha on Saturday, the National River Alliance and Bapa demanded the government stop sand filling and road construction by the Kohelia river.

### Request for Project Proposal

The Climate Bridge Fund (CBF) is a trust established by BRAC with support from the Government of Germany through KfW. The CBF is an innovative direct climate finance mechanism, which will support any local, national and international NGOs present in Bangladesh. CBF Secretariat invites project proposal from NGOs to increase the resilience of vulnerable people who are either displaced or are at the risk of being displaced due to the impacts of climate change and also highly vulnerable to COVID 19 under its **Emergency Response Window (ERW)**. CBF will support projects to be implemented in;

1. Any of the five city corporations/ municipalities among Rajshahi, Barishal, Khulna, Sirajganj and Satkhira and/or
2. Any other location based on justified needs as to be the ultimate destination of climate migrants and hotspots of COVID 19 in climate vulnerable areas.

Duration of the project will be 2 years (max) and estimated budget should be limited within BDT 3 to 10 crore.

Please visit our website for detailed information and instructions to apply: <http://www.brac.net/cbf>

All interested NGOs are requested to complete and submit the project proposal in approved template (available at the website) to: [cbf.info@brac.net](mailto:cbf.info@brac.net) with subject: **CBF-ERW/Call-NGOs/2021/01**. Project proposal must be submitted in English.

Deadline for submitting: **Wednesday, 3 March 2021, 23.59 pm BST**.

Any form of persuasion shall result in disqualification.